

**IF I DIE BEFORE I WAKE**

**Sample Packet**

By Maggie Smith

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**SYNOPSIS:** Based on the Faustus myth, a young woman sells her soul to the Devil in order to learn magic. Told through poetry, this play focuses on what to make of our limited time on earth, asking if it is better to be known well or well-known.

## **CHARACTERS**

**FELIX** — (any race; she/her) genius, so much knowledge, so little time

**MEPHISTOPHILES** — (any race; she/her or they/them) immortal, tempting, fallen from Heaven

**DOMINIC** — (any race; he/him) if someone could give him a happy ending that'd be appreciated

**LUCIFER** — (any race; any pronouns) Satan Himself, there's really no boundaries for them

**VIPIEL** — (any race; any pronouns) [vipe-EE-el] Felix's guardian angel, not at all happy to be here

## **SETTING**

Earth, Hell. Definitely not Heaven.

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE THREE**  
**THE STEPS TO SUMMONING SATAN**

*[FELIX is kneeling on the bedroom floor, on the rug. She's setting up the candles, very particular about where she places them around the room. Her bag is open on the floor, contents barely visible. Everything else she held in the bag before is laid next to the bag. She has a book next to her, that she consults.]*

FELIX

Okay, summoning, summoning, summoning. Uh... Step one...?

*[She looks at the book.]*

FELIX

Oh! Lights!

*[FELIX turns off the overhead lights, and the room is now lit by candle and string lights. Felix pulls five or six vials from the bag. Some of them liquid, some of them dust.]*

FELIX

Okay, lights, candles... Right, holy water.

*[FELIX digs through the bag, pulling out vials, some with filled liquid and others filled with dust. FELIX puts the vials on the ground once she finds a vial with a clear liquid inside. FELIX moves back from the rug, and pulls it off of the floor. She dips her finger in the red paint, and paints sigils on the floor. Once she finishes, she pulls herself back. She looks at the book, reading from it.]*

FELIX

I use this incantation to evoke the devil's spirits. I call upon all the names I know, not sacred, but profane; Lucifer and their consorts. I ask you to fill this space with your presence, surround me with your knowledge— Send me your help. God, I sound desperate.

*[FELIX looks around the room. Her eyes land on a book of poetry. She picks it up, quickly, and shuts her eyes. At some point, she sets down the book and begins to use the red paint to mark the floor again, more and more intricate the further the incantation goes.]*

FELIX

I have not felt fear yet inside my soul,  
 Only a heart's balter of bravery.  
 I stand atop the world crushed under me,  
 Yet need inter'or empty turned to whole.  
 Prove to me your orphic, leaden feat,  
 Create a religion out of my doubts,  
 Breathe your warmth within, the cold front out—  
 Elysian Hellfire makes me complete.  
 Now with my words I call you to this realm.  
 The universe is under my control,  
 To tear existence's limbs by a black hole,  
 Is nothing more than steering ships at helm.  
 I call upon a being dark, yet bright,  
 Lifeblood knowledge entwined with one of spite.

*[Insane visual effects. As the incantation becomes more and more intense, the room should fill with the words, all across the floor; the walls, everywhere. Everyone in the room's hearts should beat at once. But upon the last words, it all stops. It's silent. There's a beat.]*

FELIX

Nothing? Damn, this book sucks.

*[Everything is insane. Blasts of music. Maybe some lights? Do the effect you did during the incantation. Make it sudden. We have a demon in our presence. MEPHISTOPHELES enters in some unique way that should startle someone watching. A beat. FELIX and MEPHISTOPHELES stare face to face.]*

FELIX

Um...?

MEPHISTOPHELES

*[Proper, powerful]* Straight from the depths of Hell I've left to lend myself to— Oh, now what the hell is this?

FELIX

This— This all worked? All of the— The words, and the candles and the— A Petrarchan sonnet got you to come here?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Oh, you're one of those?

FELIX

Answer the question.

MEPHISTOPHELES

You called me, didn't you?

FELIX

The Devil. Is in my room. The Devil is— Oh my God, the Devil is in my room— Am I allowed to say, "Oh my God?" Or is that in poor taste? I don't want to offend the Devil. Am I offending the Devil?

MEPHISTOPHELES

When did I ever say I was the Devil?

FELIX

I— I was just— I was trying to summon the Devil.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Do I look like the Devil?

FELIX

I don't know! I thought maybe Hell was progressive and they made the Devil a woman!

MEPHISTOPHELES

I'm Mephistopheles.

FELIX

Oh. Mephistopheles.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Don't act all disappointed. When I got your call I thought a king was summoning me. But now I'm standing in front of— You look like a teenager.

FELIX

I'm twenty, excuse me?

MEPHISTOPHELES

I'm used to helping greatness. What makes you so special that I'm here?

FELIX

I have a job for Lucifer and Lucifer alone.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Lucifer doesn't give just anything away in exchange for a soul.

FELIX

A soul?

*[MEPHISTOPHELES begins to wander around the room.]*

MEPHISTOPHELES

Well, I'm assuming that's what you're offering, right? Your soul? A soul for, what, money? A chance at love? Wait, wait, wait. Let me guess: Beauty? You want beauty? You look like that's what you'd want.

FELIX

I want to be smarter.

MEPHISTOPHELES

*[Scoffing]* Smarter? Why do you need that? You seem pretty smart already— Given that you just conjured one of the highest grade demons this universe has ever seen. And apparently know good poetry when you hear it— Nice collection, you got any Yeats?

FELIX

I want to be immortalized for it. I want to be remembered forever, for some great triumph. I want— Okay, this is going to sound stupid.

MEPHISTOPHELES

You already do.

FELIX

I want to be magical. Can Lucifer do that?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Okay, let me get this straight. You want to sell your soul for a couple of extra brain synapses? And so you can do magic tricks? Like, literal magic?

FELIX

Yeah.

MEPHISTOPHELES

You're a new kind of delusional. But I don't care. Make yourself presentable. I'd put that vial of holy water away before Lucifer shows up and sees it.

*[FELIX quickly stashes the bottle in between two books on the shelf. Still visible, just not noticeable.]*

FELIX

Should I be... Scared? I feel scared.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Clearly you aren't scared enough to not summon the Devil.

FELIX

I don't like going into things blind.

MEPHISTOPHELES

You want my advice? Don't do it. I've been doing this for long enough. I've watched hundreds of lives get ruined by this exact type of shit. But if you want to feel the rest of your body burn along with your soul in Hell then be my guest.

LUCIFER

*[Offstage]* God, what is it now?

*[LUCIFER enters, flops face down on the bed.]*

MEPHISTOPHELES.

*[Muttering to FELIX on a final note]* Speak of the Devil and the Devil shall appear. To offer you nothing important in return for your soul.

FELIX

Holy shit. Is that them?

LUCIFER

Let's get this over with. Yes, it's me. Satan. Lucifer. The Devil. At your service. Or whatever.

FELIX

Oh, your excellency, I—

LUCIFER

Don't. Stop talking. Don't speak. I'll give you my offer, and— You look lost.

FELIX

Lost?

LUCIFER

Like you don't have a clue what's going on.

FELIX

No, I just— I don't know. I thought you'd be a bit... More.

LUCIFER

More?

FELIX

You're the Devil, you know? I just thought you'd do something impressive, I don't know. You look hungover.

LUCIFER

Huh.

*[LUCIFER raises their hand, and creates an explosion of light and noise. We can see the entire galaxy in it. It stops suddenly.]*

FELIX

What was that?

LUCIFER

That? That was me showing you the birth of the entire universe. Impressive enough, or do you want me to kill it, too?

FELIX

Um—

LUCIFER

Great. What's she want?



MEPHISTOPHELES

Magic.

LUCIFER

Again? God, I've dealt with like fifty magicians this past year.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I know.

LUCIFER

None of them amount to anything.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Believe me, I know.

LUCIFER

This is wasting my time.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I know.

LUCIFER

Fine. Where's the girl?

FELIX

Felix.

LUCIFER

Lucky. I can give you the same deal I give everyone else. Twenty-four years to achieve this goal you have—I don't care what it is. I really don't. You have these twenty-four years, and then you die.

FELIX

What should I do? For those twenty-four years, like, what should I do?

LUCIFER

Does it look like I give a shit? Play baseball, hide in a basement and write music, light the fucking lights—I wholly, sincerely, do not care. Twenty-four years. You can keep your heart,

your body, you can even keep whatever brains you have. But I get your soul. No refunds. No returns. Got it?

FELIX

Got it.

LUCIFER

So it's a deal?

FELIX

*[Beat.]* I'm hesitant.

LUCIFER

Motherfucker.

FELIX

What if I could do all of this on my own, by myself? And I had more than twenty-four years to do it? And I didn't have to give up my soul?

LUCIFER

What if? What if you die and no one knows you? What if your name vanishes from eternity's lips as soon as every candle you've lit has been snuffed? Or... What if you shake my hand, make a deal, and you use your newfound magic to heal the world, and die twenty-four years later. That's a long life, you know. And your name. Felix. Synonymous with a magical genius. Young mind. Consort to demons. Do we have a deal?

*[FELIX looks at MEPHISTOPHELES, who gives a face of "I wouldn't, but I'm not your keeper."]*

FELIX

We've got a deal.

*[LUCIFER and FELIX shake hands.]*

LUCIFER

Great. Get going with your magic or whatever. Mephistopheles will stay here with you until your time is up.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Huh? No. No, I'm not doing that, I have important things to do.

LUCIFER

Name one.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Not watching over this thing for twenty-four years, are you serious?

LUCIFER

I'm sorry, did I phrase it as a question? Because you're making it sound like I phrased it as a question. But if it isn't a question, then what could it possibly be?

MEPHISTOPHELES

An order.

LUCIFER

And what do you say when I give an order?

MEPHISTOPHELES

I say, "Fine, I'll do it, fuck you."

LUCIFER

Good. *[To FELIX]* Twenty-four years. Don't waste them.

*[LUCIFER leaves.]*

MEPHISTOPHELES

So. Twenty-four years. What first?

*[Lights dim. MEPHISTOPHELES leads the scene transition, expertly summoning her power to show us visions of magic— Old textbooks, articles, witchcraft, gods, and immortal beings. Transition into:]*

**[END OF EXCERPT]**

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